

BEST PRACTICES 2001



US Department of Agriculture
Rural Development
Office of Community Development
July 2, 2001

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Best Practices 2001

Best Practices are methods or procedures of doing community development programs, processes, and projects that are exemplary and worth sharing with other communities. Usually, they are interesting ways of addressing some issue or challenge. Often, they are unique. Always, they are instructive. Most of the time, they can be shared with other communities, whose needs are similar enough that they can be taken as one possible way of addressing a similar issue.

OCD uses best practices for their instructive value. Believing that the best teacher is experience, OCD tries to find the most valuable practices that have been developed by rural communities and shares them in a form that can be understood and applied by other rural communities.

Each Best Practice includes:

- Name of the Community/National Center of Excellence
- Round I or Round II designation
- Brief statement of the issue or challenge the best practice addresses
- Brief description of process, program, or activity that addresses the issue
- Statement of why it should be considered a best practice (e.g., what is unique about it, what is especially effective, why the same practice could be used in other locations)
- Statement about special conditions under which the practice works best (e.g., an empowerment board structure that uses county sub-councils fits very well within an EZ that serves multiple counties and needs to assure adequate representation and local control to each)
- Results or consequences of using the best practice.
- Name, e-mail, phone and fax to contact the person for more information

Categories of a Best Practice

- ❑ Administrative Capacity
- ❑ Building Sustainable Programs
- ❑ Citizen Participation
- ❑ Combining or Creating Funding Sources
- ❑ Creating and Celebrating "Wins"
- ❑ Governance
- ❑ Leadership Development
- ❑ Leadership Development
- ❑ Monitoring and Evaluating Strategic Plans
- ❑ Partnerships

□ Job Training/Leadership Development

Watsonville Enterprise Community Round I Rural Enterprise Community

Web Page Design Job Training Skills / Bridging the Digital Divide

Challenge: To provide more comprehensive and hands-on opportunities for youth to increase their technology knowledge and skills, and gain insight into technology fields they may wish to pursue.

Best Practice: Since 1998, Enterprise Community Youth Network Computer/Homework Center (ECYNCC) has implemented a special summer training and work experience program— *The Summer Student Web Page Design Project*--in which 15 to 20 high school students have been trained to design web pages for local non-profit agencies and various city departments.

The Summer Student Web Page Design Project provides youth with:

- part-time summer employment;
- academic, educational and career assistance and counseling;
- assistance in identifying career interests and how to prepare for those careers;
- computer and web page design skills;
- opportunity to improve their skills in reading, writing, and mathematics.

In the summer of 1999, a group of 20 students designed pages for the City of Watsonville's Neighborhood Services and Youth Services Divisions and created children and teen pages for the City of Watsonville Public Library. In the fall, and for the first time, three students who graduated from the summer program were hired as City employees to maintain the pages they designed during the summer program. These students currently translate the City Council and Redevelopment Agency meeting agendas, and city employment announcements into HTML and post them on the city web site.

Background: The City of Watsonville's Enterprise Community Youth Network Computer/Homework Center (ECYNCC) was founded in July 1997. The center is funded through the USDA's Enterprise Community program. The goals of the ECYNCC are to:

- provide local high school, and adult school students with access to computers and the Internet;
- be a place for the youth of Watsonville to receive homework assistance and develop computer skills; and
- serve as an educational resource for Watsonville High School and alternative school programs in the city.

As a local resource, the ECYNCC has been well utilized by youth, Watsonville High School classes and alternative school programs, as well as community-based organizations, for educational and recreational purposes.

Results: During the summer of 2000, the three current web page designers were hired additional hours to work as Student Leaders in providing training and peer mentoring for the 17 youth enrolled in the program. This has proven to be most beneficial to both the student leaders and the youth trainees. Student leaders have continued to develop their leadership and communication skills and the trainees have valued the support and guidance provided to them by their peers.

To date, three student web page designers are on staff and maintain various department web pages. They earn \$10 per hour and work 4 to 6 hours a week.

The City's Information Technology Manager has been very pleased with the work of the students and would like to have students design and maintain web pages for all city departments.

Point of Contact: Brad Blachly, Computer Center Coordinator (831) 763-4034;
e-mail: bblachly@ci.watsonville.ca.us

□ **Communication/Partnership**

Empowerment Alliance of Southwest Florida Round II Rural Enterprise Community

Community Calendar

Challenge: The challenges that were faced were twofold. First, was how to create an identity for the rural Enterprise Community which spreads out over a 750 square mile area, two counties and an Indian Reservation and bring it together as one community for purposes of accomplishing the EC's goals. The second challenge was how to communicate information to EC partners, as well as to the community at large.

Best Practice: To address these two problems, the EC created, printed and distributed a community calendar. The calendar clearly states the mission of the organization, what communities are included, and identifies the partners and provides a contact for more information. The calendar is a celebration of the community and instills pride. Pictures in the calendar show events and festivals that occur within the EC such as the Cinco de Mayo festival and the Harvest festival. The calendar also identifies meeting dates and times for community groups, especially those of the Enterprise Community.

Background: The Calendar includes significant pictures of our community, such as Hooker's Point Swim Club, Harlem Library, and the Cattle Round Up in Immokalee and Lake Trafford. The EC also had two pictures donated to it by noted photographer, Clyde Butcher who specializes in black and white photos. Mr. Butcher has donated his time and photographs to the Immokalee Community and Lake Trafford Restoration efforts.

Community group meeting dates include the Immokalee Chamber of Commerce Meetings, Rotary, and Inter-Agency groups, and special events such as the Brown Sugar Festival, Swamp Cabbage Festival, Cinco de Mayo and Harvest Block Party.

Results: This has been a wonderful tool for communication in the community. It creates a sense of community identity and instilled a sense of pride and ownership, especially when someone well known is in the picture. The information provided has been useful to communicate meetings and important events, and has encouraged the public to participate more in community events. These calendars have been seen everywhere around town. The EC intends to do it next year and make it even better.

Point of Contact: Barbara A. Cacchione, Enterprise Community Coordinator, 2400 Tamiami Trail North, Suite 300, Naples, Florida 34103; (941) 566-8936; email bceasf@mediaone.net

□ **Program Innovation/Partnership**

Southeast Oklahoma Enterprise Community (SOEC)

Round I Enterprise Community

Round II Champion Community

"One Stop Shop" for Home Buyers

Challenge: To increase home ownership in the Enterprise Community.

Best Practice Activity/Process: A new 12,000 square-foot center provides a "one stop shop" for home buyers, marking a new beginning in the quest for home ownership in the Enterprise Community. The concept of the new "Little Dixie Home Ownership Center" is to provide a place where all the services and training needed to shop for, purchase, rehabilitate, insure, maintain and manage a home are under one roof.

Each of the departments in the building is related to housing. Services provided at the center include: homebuyer counseling, pre-purchase assistance, lending programs, post purchase guidance, self-help housing, individual development accounts, purchase, rehabilitation resale and home inspection assistance. This classic mixture of loans, technical assistance, training, and information provision provides real housing opportunities for rural residents. It also depends on working closely with the local community, and regional and state organizations.

Background. The Little Dixie Homeownership Center includes an SOEC housing program that incorporates resources from a variety of sources and includes extensive technical assistance to borrowers in locating and securing other funds to meet housing needs. A combination of federal and private sector funds are utilized to help secure affordable housing.

Among these is a new matched savings program called "PROJECT SAVE" to help low and moderate-income residents become homeowners. The program allows residents of three counties to make monthly deposits into a special savings account and then receive two dollars for each dollar saved when the family buys a home. The SEOC will also provide housing development assistance and other economic development services to the community through its Rural Community Development Initiative Grant.

Key financial partners for the Homeownership Center were Housing and Urban Development, Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation, Local Initiative Support Corp., USDA, and the Fannie Mae Foundation. Also housed in the new center is Little Dixie's Self-Help and Resource Education program which provides training and management assistance to Self-Help Housing Grantees and potential grantees in an 11-state region of the country.

Point of Contact: Jerry Pool, Director of Operations, Little Dixie Homeownership Center, 500 E. Rosewood, Hugo, OK 74743 (580) 326-3351; Ltdixie@www.ezec.gov

